

CEK 18/15

REMARKS BY

C. EVERETT KOOP, M.D., SC.D.
SURGEON GENERAL
U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

AT

TRAINING SESSION FOR
COMMIT FIELD DIRECTORS
NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE

MONDAY, JANUARY 30, 1989

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE

COMMIT —
1989

THANK YOU TERRY. IT IS A PLEASURE FOR
ME TO MEET WITH YOU TODAY. I WISH I HAD MORE
TIME TO SPEND WITH YOU, BUT UNFORTUNATELY I
CAN ONLY BE HERE BRIEFLY.

BECAUSE I HAVE SPENT A GREAT DEAL OF MY
LIFE TRAINING PEOPLE, AND SINCE THIS IS A
TRAINING SESSION, I WANT TO SPEND JUST A
MOMENT CONTRIBUTING TO YOUR EDUCATION. I
WANT TO REVIEW SOME OF THE KEY FINDINGS OF MY
MOST RECENT REPORT ON SMOKING AND HEALTH.
THAT WAY, IF SOMEONE EVER ASKS YOU ABOUT THE
1989 REPORT, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO SAY YOU HEARD
IT FROM ME.

AS YOU KNOW, THE RELEASE OF THIS REPORT MARKED THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST SURGEON GENERAL'S REPORT ON SMOKING AND HEALTH. IN SPITE OF 25 YEARS OF REPORTS AND EFFORTS TO CONTROL SMOKING, THERE WAS PLENTY OF BAD NEWS IN THE LATEST REPORT. IN 1985, 390,000 AMERICANS DIED BECAUSE OF TOBACCO USE. THAT'S ONE OUT OF EVERY SIX DEATHS. LUNG CANCER, NEARLY ALL OF IT CAUSED BY SMOKING, HAS NOW CAUGHT UP WITH BREAST CANCER AS THE LEADING CAUSE OF CANCER DEATHS AMONG WOMEN. IN ADDITION, WE NOW KNOW THAT SMOKING

- 3 -

FOR MEN < 65 3.7x

FOR WOMEN ~~<65~~ 4.5x

50% of STROKE < 65
18% > 65

IS A MAJOR CAUSE OF CEREBROVASCULAR DISEASE,
OR STROKE, THE THIRD LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH
IN THE UNITED STATES. IT'S NUMBERS LIKE
THESE THAT CONVINCED ME TO MAKE SMOKING A
PRIORITY ISSUE AS SURGEON GENERAL.

THERE'S MORE BAD NEWS. SMOKING IS STILL
MORE COMMON AMONG BLACKS, BLUE-COLLAR
WORKERS, AND PEOPLE WITH LESS EDUCATION. *i.e. FEWER YEARS OF SCHOOLING*
WITH THESE GROUPS, OUR EFFORTS AT SMOKING
CONTROL MUST BE IMPROVED. WITH ADOLESCENTS
TOO, WE HAVE AN URGENT NEED FOR

IMPROVEMENT. THE RATE OF SMOKING AMONG HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS IS NO LONGER DECLINING AS IT ONCE WAS. THE AVERAGE AGE AT WHICH PEOPLE START SMOKING CONTINUES TO DECREASE. ONE QUARTER OF HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS WHO SMOKE HAD THEIR FIRST CIGARETTE BY THE SIXTH GRADE.

BUT THERE'S SOME GOOD NEWS IN MY REPORT AS WELL. THE PREVALENCE OF SMOKING CONTINUES TO DECREASE, ALTHOUGH NOT AS RAPIDLY AS WE'D LIKE. BETWEEN 1964 AND 1985 OVER THREE-QUARTERS OF A MILLION DEATHS WERE AVOIDED OR

POSTPONED AS A RESULT OF DECISIONS TO QUIT
SMOKING OR NOT TO START. AND BY THE YEAR
2000, THREE MILLION LIVES WILL HAVE BEEN
EXTENDED BECAUSE OF THESE DECISIONS IN THOSE
FIFTEEN
~~TWENTY~~ YEARS. WE'RE SEEING EVERY DAY THE
ENORMOUS IMPACT OF ALL OUR EFFORTS TO HELP
PEOPLE AVOID TOBACCO.

MORE AND MORE STATE AND LOCAL
GOVERNMENTS ARE RECOGNIZING THE NEED TO
RESTRICT SMOKING IN PUBLIC PLACES. THE
NUMBER OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES WITH THESE
RESTRICTIONS HAS MORE THAN TRIPLED IN THE

LAST THREE YEARS. THIS IS A VERY EXCITING TREND, AND ONE THAT DEMONSTRATES THE CONCERN PEOPLE NOW HAVE ABOUT PASSIVE AS WELL AS ACTIVE SMOKING.

THOSE ARE SOME OF THE KEY FINDINGS OF MY REPORT, AND NOW YOU'VE HEARD IT STRAIGHT FROM THE SURGEON GENERAL HIMSELF. IT'S CLEAR THAT AFTER 25 YEARS OF SURGEON GENERAL'S REPORTS, SMOKING IS STILL AN ENORMOUS HEALTH PROBLEM, BUT THERE'S ALSO PLENTY OF PROGRESS TO REPORT.

OF COURSE WE'RE EXPECTING PROJECTS LIKE
COMMIT WILL GIVE US EVEN MORE GOOD NEWS.
THAT'S WHAT I REALLY CAME TO TALK TO YOU
ABOUT.

AS YOU CONTINUE YOUR TRAINING TODAY, AND
ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU ARE BACK DOING YOUR WORK
BACK HOME, REMEMBER THAT YOU HAVE THE
SUPPORT, ENCOURAGEMENT, AND OCCASIONALLY EVEN
THE ENVY OF ALL OF US IN THE PUBLIC HEALTH
SERVICE. YOU ARE ON THE LEADING EDGE OF THE
LARGEST SMOKING CONTROL PROJECT EVER

CONDUCTED. COMMIT IS A HUGE ENDEAVOR, AND
ONE ^{OF WHICH} ~~THAT~~ I AM GENUINELY PROUD, ~~OF~~ I'M SURE
THAT ALL OF YOU ARE WELL AWARE OF THE
IMPORTANCE OF COMMIT FOR YOUR COMMUNITIES,
BUT PLEASE REMEMBER IT IS A VITAL PROJECT FOR
THE REST OF THE NATION, AS WELL. WHAT WE
LEARN FROM YOUR SUCCESSES, AND EVEN YOUR
SETBACKS, WILL SHAPE TOBACCO CONTROL EFFORTS
THROUGHOUT THIS COUNTRY AND THE WORLD.

COMMIT IS A CHALLENGE. IT HAS BEEN A
CHALLENGE FOR NCI TO CREATE, AND NOW IT'S A
CHALLENGE FOR YOU TO CARRY OUT. BUT IT'S

ALSO A CHALLENGE TO YOUR COMMUNITY AND
ESPECIALLY THE HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AND
OTHERS WHO ALREADY WORK TO CONTROL SMOKING.
WITH THE EXPERTISE AND RESOURCES THAT YOU ARE
CARRYING TO YOUR COMMUNITIES, YOU ARE
CHALLENGING THEM TO ADOPT STATE-OF-THE-ART
SMOKING CONTROL TECHNIQUES AND TO MAKE
SMOKING THE PRIORITY IT SHOULD BE. YOU ARE
CHALLENGING THEM TO BE THE BEST IN THE WORLD
AT WHAT THEY DO.

I'VE BEEN IN THE BUSINESS OF PUBLIC
HEALTH FOR LONG ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT YOU WILL

HAVE FRUSTRATING DAYS. YOU'LL HAVE DAYS WHEN YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'RE LOSING GROUND, RATHER THAN MAKING PROGRESS. ON THOSE DAYS JUST REMEMBER THESE THREE THINGS: FIRST, YOU'RE SAVING LIVES, RIGHT NOW, IN YOUR OWN COMMUNITY. SECOND, YOU'RE MAKING YOUR COMMUNITY A MUCH BETTER PLACE TO LIVE. AND THIRD, YOU'RE TEACHING NCI, AND ME, AND THE REST OF THE WORLD HOW TO PROCEED IN MAKING A SMOKE-FREE SOCIETY.

YOU HAVE MY PERSONAL SUPPORT,
~~CONGRATULATIONS~~, AND RESPECT. I WISH YOU
EVERY SUCCESS, SINCE YOUR SUCCESS IS SUCCESS
FOR US ALL. LEARN ALL THAT YOU CAN FROM EACH
OTHER, AND THEN LET'S GET THE JOB DONE.